I DON'T TAKE COMFORT IN THIS SORT OF THING BECAUSE IT LETS THE IGNORANT PRESS OFF SCOT FREE—EVERY TIME

UNDISCOVERED

THEY CALL THE PRESUMING DR LIVINGSTONE A MUDMAN & GET VINDICATED BUT OF IT.

THEY DID THE SAME THING 20-30 YEARS AGO TO ① A CERTAIN DUCK FARMER, ② A DEFROCKED AMERICAN

③ AND AN OPPORTUNISTIC LEGAL HAWK PLENTY OF LEFT-WING CAUSES

AM-NY--JFK-Conspiracy Theorist, Bjt,800
If At First You Don't Succeed, Write Another JFK Conspiracy Book
AP Photo planned

By RICHARD PYLE
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- As certain as the storms of autumn, each anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination brings a new spate of books. Almost as certain is that one will be by Harrison Edward Livingstone.

The Baltimore-based writer has spent the past decade in a single-minded quest to expose what he calls ``the real crime of the century'' -- the government cover-up of an assassination conspiracy rooted in Texas money, power and avarice.

Livingstone is just one of many who devote vast time, energy and money to the murder in Dallas 32 years ago Wednesday. And for each investigator, scholar, writer, researcher or scientist who claims a new discovery -- there are some 500 books on the subject -- there is another who disagrees.

The result is a jealousy-torn ``assassination research community'' in which scholarly discussion often gives way to vitriol, scorn and slander.

``It's a combination of serious scholars and of other people that you might call, well, dilettantes,'' said Bob Porter, spokesman for the Sixth Floor Museum, a county-run archive that occupies Lee Harvey Oswald's perch in the Texas School Book Depository.

Arriving before a reporter for an interview last weekend, Livingstone noticed a fax from a rival conspiracy theorist on the reporter's desk. The reporter arrived to find Livingstone arguing with his rival over the phone.

Stocky, bearded and intense, Livingstone admits he is obsessed with exposing the ``forces of darkness'' responsible for Kennedy's murder. But after four books in six years -- all hard-cover jobs of 500 to 700 pages -- credibility still eludes him.

``For the research I've done I should have about four Pulitzer Prizes by now,'' the 58-year-old bachelor says. ``I am very bitter about the treatment this work receives -- or doesn't receive.''

Unlike Livingstone, most researchers pursue the case as an academic endeavor while clinging to the hope that somebody, somewhere, might step forward to tell the real story.

Among the latter is the field's most prolific writer, Harold Weisberg, who has written seven books and says he has four others in manuscript form. Now 82 and in poor health at his home in Frederick, Md., Weisberg is working on an assassination archive ``for national posterity.'' "and nation's history"

Although Livingstone and Weisberg agree that someone besides Oswald killed Kennedy, and even share the same New York publisher, Carroll & Graf, there is only bad blood between them.

Livingstone scornfully says Weisberg is responsible for ``extraordinarily muddled thinking that has kept this nation in turmoil over the years.'' Weisberg refused to discuss Livingstone.

A Harvard graduate who studied law in Baltimore and has written several novels, Livingstone recalls hitchhiking to Dallas a month after Kennedy's death. He slept in the rail yards near Dealey Plaza, the site of the murder.

``I was devastated by the assassination. I just wanted to go where he did,'' Livingstone said.

Some years and many Dallas visits later, he concluded that the Warren Commission report covered up the fact that Kennedy was killed by Texas oil and industrial interests who stood to lose millions if the president withdrew from Vietnam.

In 1989, Livingstone spent $32,000 to self-publish ``High Treason,'' claiming that some autopsy photos had been doctored to conceal evidence that Kennedy was shot from in front, not the rear.

``High Treason'' was snapped up by a paperback publisher and made the New York Times best-seller list. It was again a best-seller for 15 weeks in 1993, when it was reissued to coincide with the Oliver Stone film ``JFK.''

Not surprisingly, Livingstone has little regard for ``JFK,'' a quasi-documentary based on the theories of Jim Garrison, the late New Orleans prosecutor and judge. ``It set the whole Kennedy assassination research effort back 10 years,'' Livingstone says.

In 1992, ``High Treason 2'' also hit the best-seller list for eight weeks. ``Killing the Truth,'' released in 1994, didn't sell nearly as well.

In his latest, ``Killing Kennedy and the Hoax of the Century,'' Livingstone says the ``real news'' is that along with autopsy photos and X-rays, most amateur film from the scene was doctored while in FBI custody -- including the famous Zapruder film.

``I have a deep sympathy for Harry Livingstone and ... I find myself in agreement that the autopsy photos have been altered,'' said David Mantik, a California doctor who has supported Livingstone's work. ``But I also think the messenger may hurt the message.''

``In my view he's something of a madman,'' said James Lesar of the Washington-based Assassination Archive Research Center. ``He's gotten into the business of attacking other critics, and he's not well liked in the community.''

But will all these researchers ever resolve what happened?

``Not in our lifetime,'' Weisberg says.